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INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS NAIROBI 003281

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

E.O. 12958 N/A

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - TELCON WITH NGRC CHAIRMAN ALI MAHDI

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Special Envoy spoke with National Governance and Reconciliation Council Chair Ali Mahdi by telephone August 14 to obtain update on National Reconciliation Congress. Mahdi confirmed that reconciliation portion of proceedings were "successfully" completed August 9 and that political phase would commence by week's end. Contrary to what we had heard from Prime Minister Gedi, no ceremonial interlude is projected between NRC social and political reconciliation phases. END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) Mahdi told Special Envoy that he had intended to reconvene the NRC to begin the political agenda points on August 16, following the recess permitting the Secretariat to prepare reconciliation papers for signature. The Hawiye Ugas from Hiran, however, had requested waiting until Saturday, August 18 to permit more time for intra-Hawiye reconciliation. Mahdi indicated that he probably would do so if the Ugas plan seemed reasonable.

¶3. (SBU) Consideration of political agenda items would require one to two weeks by Mahdi's projections, perhaps finishing as early as August 25, but more likely August 30. In any case Mahdi intends to finish NRC proceedings before the beginning of Ramadan in mid-September although, if necessary, that date could be exceeded as the important goal is to complete the work for the return to Somali democracy, not end by a specific date.

¶4. (SBU) Among the political issues on NRC agenda are preparation for a census, guidelines for establishing a multi-party system, immediate appointment of a Constitution drafting committee, referendum and elections by 2009. The operative decisions on these items would be in the form of recommendations for TFG enactment. While the foregoing are all part of the Roadmap to Governance, Reconciliation and Dialogue, Mahdi also volunteered that the oft-mentioned amendment to the Transitional Federal Charter to permit more openness in Ministerial appointments. This would eliminate the TFC requirement that Ministers must be Members of Parliament.

¶5. (SBU) In answer to Special Envoy's inquiry, Mahdi said the current delegate count is "closed" at 2,605 or almost double the original figure. Given much speculation and concern that some of the important clan leaders were still not participating, Chairman Mahdi, claimed such was not the case; that all the important ?Sultans? were on board. He did ask, however, if we could help encourage some of the Asmara dissidents to join. According to him, the NGRC has been reaching out directly and through intermediaries in the diaspora to the Asmara group, including ex-CIC, proposing a meeting in Djibouti. Thus far, however, no the NGRC had not responded to the invitation no proposed any list of potential participants.  
Ranneberger